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Forests and culture

Discussion paper submitted by the major groups

Summary

It is estimated that over 300 million families live in or near tropical forests. Worldwide, a total of 1.6 billion people depend on forests for subsistence. Over the years, such populations have used knowledge and practices that have ensured their sustenance and survival. This knowledge is most often interwoven with traditional religious beliefs, customs, folklore, land use practices and community-level decision-making processes, and has historically been dynamic and enabled them to respond to changing environmental conditions to ensure that forests continue to provide both tangible and non-tangible benefits. The present paper reviews the role of traditional and local knowledge in the context of sustainable forest management and presents recommendations for integrating and mainstreaming traditional forest-related knowledge in national forest plans and programmes while ensuring the equitable sharing of benefits arising from such knowledge.

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I. Introduction

1. Forests play a vital role in the life and culture of people around the world. The reverence for and adoration of trees has a strong psychological and social foundation in most human cultures. The variety of cultural values and symbolic functions ascribed to forests are as numerous and diverse as the communities and cultures in which they have been documented. Forests feature in all aspects of culture: language, history, art, religion, medicine, politics and even social structure.

2. In many African cultures, trees feature in myths and folklore. Forest trees serve as the link between the sky and Earth and are associated with both creation and the underworld. In parts of West Africa, forests provide the venue for many cultural events. The *arbre à palabre* is a location for social and political meetings with members of the community. These are the locations where elders sit under big trees and talk, argue and discuss issues until they agree. It is a place where political, social and judicial decisions are made. In different communities in West Africa, specific tree species serve as *arbres à palabre*. In Côte d'Ivoire, species such as *Blighia sapida*, *Cordia millenii* and *Bombax buonopozense* are some of the preferred tree species. The Oubangui tribe of Central Africa plants a tree for every newborn child. For female children, a fast-growing tree species is planted. The girl's development is linked to the tree's growth. If the tree's growth declines there is fear for the health of the child and a healer is called upon, and when she is sick, she is brought to the tree for ritual treatment. When the tree starts to bear fruit, it is time for the child to marry. When a person dies, his or her spirit is believed to reside in this personal "birthright" tree.

3. In other regions, there exists a relationship between forests and the spiritual realm. Lord Buddha would sit alone in the depths of the forest in meditation, and it was in the midst of a forest that he was shown the four great truths. The Dai people of Yunan Province in China believe that the forest is the cradle of human life and that forests are at one with the supernatural realm. Forests in European culture were also considered to be sites of miracles and of the search for great spiritual awakenings, and the forest itself was held to be a form of primitive church or temple. The first temples in Europe were forest groves. Ties to nature manifest themselves most notably in Turkish culture. After conversion to Islam, the importance of trees grew in Turkish culture because the Prophet Mohammed compared a good Muslim to a palm tree and declared that planting a tree would be accepted as a substitute for alms.

Sacred groves

4. Sacred groves manifest a range of traditional and cultural values attributed to forests throughout the world. Sacred groves are specific forest sites imbued with powers beyond those of human beings. They are often ancestral burial sites where people can communicate with their ancestors. Trees within these groves are considered as sacred, housing spirits and providing links to ancestors.

5. In some areas, sacred groves are the only intact forests remaining, for example, in the Mijikenda Kaya forests, where the Mijikenda community lives, along the coast of Kenya. Although many cultural traditions are disappearing with the rapidly changing social and physical environment, sacred groves often remain as

valued elements of cultural heritage. The groves are also often the site of ritual healings and locations where villagers find particular plant medicines.

6. Access to most sacred forests is restricted by taboos, codes and customs, to particular activities and members of the community. Gathering, hunting, woodcutting and farming are strictly prohibited to the Dai people in the holy hills in China. However, control over extractive activities in sacred groves varies between communities and cultures.

7. In some communities and cultures a complete ban is not in place, and the limited collection of fallen wood, fruits from the forest floor, medicinal plants and honey, and some other activities, are permitted, even if strictly controlled. Sacred groves in general have survived for many hundreds of years and today act as a reservoir of biodiversity and the library of nature.

8. In some areas, sacred groves play a major part in safeguarding critical sites in the hydrological cycle of watershed areas. In different cultures, some specific forest resources are revered or serve as religious or cultural symbols. The birch in Scandinavia, the larch in Siberia, the redwood in California, the fig tree in India and the iroko in West Africa are widely revered and respected. The oak was worshipped by Romans, Druids, Greeks and Celts as the home deity. In Europe, fairies were said to have made their homes in old oak trees, departing through holes where branches had fallen; it was considered healing to touch the fairy doors with diseased parts of one's body.

9. Trees such as *Ceiba pentandra* (associated with burials and ancestors in the Amazon), *Copaifera religiosa* (associated with fecundity, wealth, power and fame in South America) and *Milicia excelsa* (associated with fertility and birth in West Africa) are sacred to the people. Some trees also serve judicial roles. They form physical boundary markers that define property and provide evidence of usuary rights in judicial disputes. In many traditions in Senegal and Côte d'Ivoire, trees play a central role in the land tenure system. Planted trees provide evidence of land use rights for individual or lineage groups. In Ghana, there are court cases that have been adjudicated in favour of individuals who have planted and tended naturally regenerating fruit trees on a piece of land for several years, without interference, considering such activity as constituting proof of possession.

II. Traditional and local knowledge and sustainable forest management

10. It is estimated that over 300 million families live in or near tropical forests and obtain part or all of their livelihood and food from forests. In fact, a total of 1.6 billion people worldwide depend on forests for their subsistence. Forests are key to non-farm employment for the forest fringe communities. Over the years they have used harvesting methods that are ecologically benign and have ensured their sustenance and survival.

11. The paradigm of sustainable forest management has been widely embraced at the national and international policy levels, but it has not yet been implemented to the point where it is appreciably mitigating the negative trends affecting the world's forests, particularly in the tropics. Sustainable forest management provides an increasingly sophisticated set of policies and tools for managing forests in a more

sustainable way. Implementing sustainable forest management, however, requires overcoming many of the same economic, political and institutional hurdles that drive deforestation and forest degradation.

12. Forest management would benefit from the incorporation of the traditional knowledge of indigenous and local people. Traditional forest-related knowledge has long been known to have implications for forest management, the conservation of forest biodiversity and the identification of forest genetic resources.

13. Traditional knowledge and practices have sustained the livelihoods, cultures and forest resources of local and indigenous communities for centuries. This knowledge is most often interwoven with traditional religious beliefs, customs, folklore, land use practices and community-level decision-making processes and has historically been dynamic, responding to changing environmental, social, economic and political conditions to ensure that forests continue to provide tangible (food, fodder, medicine, water, soil) and non-tangible (spiritual, social, psychological health) benefits to both present and future generations.

14. The current limitations of modern science to deal effectively with environmental issues of increasing magnitude and complexity, including global warming and the conservation of biodiversity, have opened the door to other sources of knowledge. Society can learn from the traditional skills a great deal that is applicable to the sustainable management of complex ecological systems. Traditional knowledge holders have developed extensive knowledge about the spatial and temporal distributions of natural resources, the behaviours of many natural species and the factors that influence them. This knowledge, distinctive to families, communities, tribes and cultures, arises from personal experience and practices passed on from one generation to the next. Over the years, local and indigenous people worldwide have developed a variety of vegetation management practices.

III. Traditional knowledge and medicine

15. Traditional medicine refers to health practices, approaches, knowledge and beliefs incorporating plant and animal-based media, spiritual therapies and combinations to diagnose, treat and prevent illnesses or maintain well-being. In Africa, Asia and Latin America, it is estimated that over 70 per cent of the population uses traditional medicine to meet their primary health-care needs. The World Health Organization estimates that in Europe, North America and other industrialized regions, over 50 per cent of the population has used complementary or alternative medicines at least once, and the global market for herbal medicines is currently valued at over $60 billion, and growing steadily. About 25 per cent of modern medicines are made from plants, and many of these plant-based medicines are used for the same purposes for which the local and indigenous communities had used them. Indeed, traditional knowledge underpins traditional medical practices.

16. The construction of traditional knowledge databases and archives about native groups' uses of local plants is one sure way of combating biopiracy, blocking patents by multinational companies and ensuring that holders and users of traditional knowledge on traditional medicinal plants receive fair reward for such knowledge. A database of traditional formulations is needed to allow examiners to compare patent applications with existing traditional knowledge. India is one of the

countries that has successfully documented traditional knowledge and successfully fought patents granted at the United States Patent and Trademark Office on turmeric (*Curcuma longa*) and at the European Patent Office on neem (*Azadirachta indica*).

17. A number of countries have national regulations or are in the process of preparing regulations on herbs and medicines, but the legislative control of medicinal plants has not evolved around a structured model. It is proposed that an effective legal system for the protection of intellectual property rights of traditional knowledge be established by Governments in order to protect the traditional knowledge of local and indigenous peoples.

IV. Traditional knowledge on forests and climate change

18. There are still major gaps in climate science. Traditional knowledge can provide valuable insight into scientific investigations on the effects on and coping strategies for climate change.

19. Local and indigenous people have lived in changing climates over hundreds of years, and as a result of their close relationship and dependence on forests, they have developed and used diverse tools to assess the impact of the changing climate on their communities and ecosystems and have become resilient and developed adaptive strategies. Local observations of the direct effects of climate change corroborate scientific predictions and include: temperature and precipitation changes; coastal erosion; changes in wildlife; pests and waterborne disease distribution; extreme weather events, for example, droughts and floods; and changing weather patterns. In addition, many local and indigenous communities are able to forecast impending weather based on early warning signs (typically related to the sky and sea, movements of the sun and moon, changes in plant phenology and changes in animal behaviour). As an example, there is already a vast store of information, at the community level, on monsoon prediction.

20. Traditional knowledge can provide scientists and resource managers with a long-term perspective that is lacking in more typical observations and can establish the relationship between the historical impact of land use and climate change. In the context of climate change research, local and indigenous communities provide important sources of climate history, baseline data and expertise at the local level. Traditional knowledge on climate change not only augments scientific information but also promotes scientific enquiry.

V. Integration of traditional knowledge and formal science

21. Despite their important contribution to sustainable forest management and sustainable livelihoods, traditional forest-related knowledge and practices are fast disappearing. The negative implications of this loss of knowledge on livelihoods, culture and biodiversity and the capacity of the forest to provide goods and services remain poorly understood, unappreciated and undervalued by policymakers, and the general public in many countries.

22. The question is whether there is any possibility of integrating formal science and ethnoscience. Empirical evidence suggests the potential for such integration exists. Traditional knowledge systems indeed complement scientific knowledge

systems by providing practical experience in living within an ecosystem and responding to ecosystem change. Traditional and scientific knowledge systems are not mutually exclusive and both are required to achieve sustainable forest management. For example, a study in Nepal showed that traditional knowledge on firewood and fodder values corresponded to scientific assessment. The research revealed that local people's preference for a range of 16 firewood plants and 23 fodder plants was closely related to the fuelwood value index and the fodder value index. In the areas of vegetation classification, distribution, management and growth characteristics, traditional knowledge systems and scientific knowledge systems are in accord with each other.

VI. Recommendations

23. **In the light of the present paper, the following recommendations are made:**

(a) **A new type of partnership is needed between the scientific community, national Governments, international development agencies and local and indigenous people for the management of tropical forests;**

(b) **The scientific community should develop an appreciation of and respect for knowledge systems different from their own that focus on sustaining relationships integral to the entire forest ecosystem;**

(c) **Gaps between traditional and modern science systems should be identified, and indicators for monitoring the role of traditional forest-related knowledge in sustainable forest management should be researched;**

(d) **Local and indigenous people should be provided with adequate training and technical assistance to adapt their traditional land use systems to modern economic conditions;**

(e) **Traditional forest-related knowledge should be documented in close partnership with holders and users of this knowledge system, using ethically appropriate best practices;**

(f) **The general public should be educated on the livelihood and environmental values of traditional forest-related knowledge. A user-friendly knowledge system must be set up at the national level to collect, classify, test and disseminate traditional knowledge;**

(g) **Traditional forest-related knowledge should be mainstreamed into national forest plans and programmes with the involvement of all relevant stakeholders, including local and indigenous communities;**

(h) **Equitable benefit-sharing regimes should be developed for the use of traditional forest-related knowledge;**

(i) **A legal system for the protection of traditional forest-related knowledge should be developed to prevent attempts to patent existing traditional knowledge and curb biopiracy.**

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Discussion paper on the Community Forestry Programme in Nepal: an example of excellence in community-based forest management

Summary

There is growing evidence that transferring authority and responsibility for sustainable forest management to communities leads to both a significant reduction in poverty and improved forest conditions. The Community Forestry Programme of Nepal is a leading example of the achievements and continuing challenges of community-based forest management. By 2009, one third of the population of Nepal was directly participating in the management of over one quarter of Nepal's forest area. Significant benefits have flowed from this large-scale mobilization of the rural population of Nepal, including improvements in livelihoods, expanded forest areas, the conservation of biodiversity, and the participation of women. New issues are emerging, such as the need to develop appropriate support services for the development of forest-based community enterprises and to strengthen tenure arrangements to ensure the effective implementation of reducing emissions from deforestation and forest degradation. As interest in community-based forest management grows in many parts of the world, the experience of the Government and rural communities of Nepal provides a valuable guide.

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I. Introduction

1. Throughout the last quarter of the twentieth century, many countries in Asia, Africa and Latin America have explored innovative approaches that shifted power from the central State to local government, civil society and the private sector. The shifting of power reshapes the distribution of authority and responsibilities among the key actors.

2. In the forest sector, an important shift has occurred since 1985, with at least 200 million hectares (ha) of global forest designated or legally transferred to communities, and families and individuals (see the figures below; Sunderlin and others, 2008). Presently, 11 per cent of the world's forests are managed by communities. That figure is expected to rise from 378 million ha of community-owned and managed land in 2001 to 740 million ha by 2015, representing 45 per cent of the world's forest estate (White and Martin, 2002). Much of this area is managed under some form of collaborative arrangement involving power-sharing between stakeholder groups.

3. Studies show that the shifting of authority and responsibilities has resulted in improvements in livelihoods and forest conditions. Degraded forest lands have been regenerated. Community institutions have been strengthened, with improved management skills and performance. Community-based forest management is one of the most promising methods for combining forest conservation with poverty reduction and climate change mitigation and adaptation. It has demonstrated an impressive capacity to enhance the environmental sustainability, social equity and livelihoods security for forest-dependent people, and to contribute to the design of more effective forest policies and programmes.

4. Quantifying progress is often challenging. In particular, it is difficult to isolate the contribution of community forestry to the observed improvement in forest conditions and livelihoods. Along with its growing success, community forestry also faces a number of challenges, particularly in the areas of institutional capacity, internal group governance, enterprise development, and the transfer of livelihood benefits to forest-dependent people.

5. There are rich and valuable experiences in community forestry coming out of broad experience in many countries that could provide a strong basis for new strategies for sustainable forest management. The time has come to share that experience and knowledge to improve community forestry and move it ahead. An outstanding example of the achievements and continuing challenges of community forestry is found in Nepal.

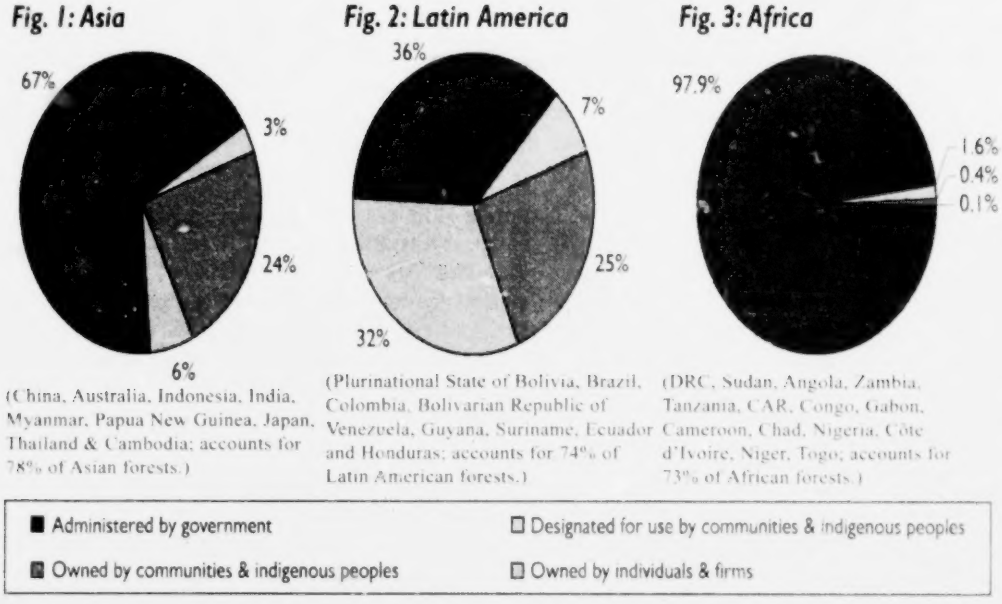


Fig. 1: Asia
67%
3%
24%
6%
(China, Australia, Indonesia, India, Myanmar, Papua New Guinea, Japan, Thailand & Cambodia; accounts for 78% of Asian forests.)
Fig. 2: Latin America
36%
7%
25%
32%
(Plurinational State of Bolivia, Brazil, Colombia, Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, Guyana, Suriname, Ecuador and Honduras; accounts for 74% of Latin American forests.)
Fig. 3: Africa
97.9%
1.6%
0.4%
0.1%
(DRC, Sudan, Angola, Zambia, Tanzania, CAR, Congo, Gabon, Cameroon, Chad, Nigeria, Côte d'Ivoire, Niger, Togo; accounts for 73% of African forests.)
Administered by government
Designated for use by communities & indigenous peoples
Owned by communities & indigenous peoples
Owned by individuals & firms

Source: Sunderlin and others, 2008.
Abbreviations: DRC = Democratic Republic of the Congo; CAR = Central African Republic.

II. Community forestry in Nepal

6. In Nepal, community forestry is a village-level forestry activity implemented on community-controlled land, where local populations participate in the planning, establishing, managing and harvesting of forest crops, and receive a major proportion of the socio-economic and ecological benefits from the forest. Community forestry involves the handing over of national forest to a user or users' group pursuant to the Forest Act for its conservation and utilization for the collective interest.

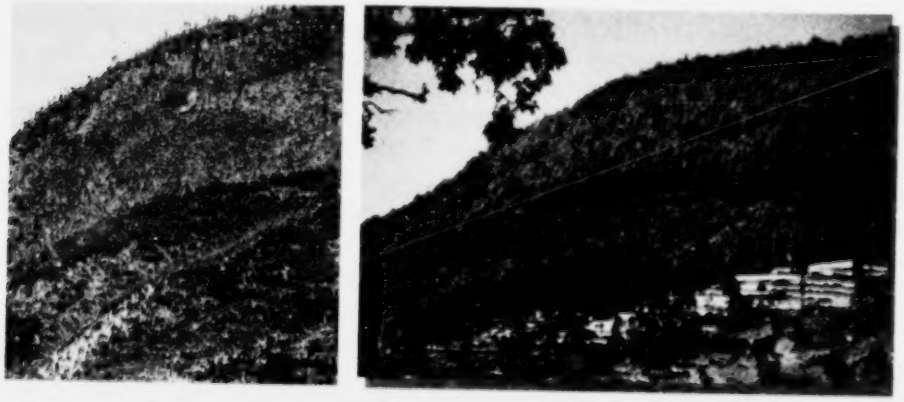
7. Community forestry was introduced through national forest plans, relevant legal and institutional frameworks and decentralization processes. It was complemented by pilot projects on the ground that demonstrated the feasibility of community forestry. Sponsored by the State Government, the programme gradually opened up space for collaboration between local governments and forest communities.

8. The enthusiasm for community forestry has been constrained by the weak tenure arrangements for communities in many countries. The consideration of tenure is important as tenure security is at the heart of community forestry. Research reveals a clear link between tenure rights and strong community institutions and fruitful outcomes (Larson and others, 2010).

9. Forest tenure determines who can use what resources for how long, and under what conditions. It involves some combination of ownership and use rights over a particular piece of forest and the range of resources it contains. The necessary

components of forest tenure include excludability, duration, assurance, and robustness (Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, 2007). Three forces — the indigenous people's movement, the trend to democratic decentralization and conservation interests — have shaped the trends in forest tenure globally.

10. The evolution of tenure rights has had three phases in Nepal. First, there has been a shift from State and individual ownership and open access to collective management. This is possible thanks to the community concession contract introduced and consistently followed up by the Government of Nepal that allocated usufruct rights to collective entities. Secondly, legislation was set in place by the Government of Nepal to provide land rights to communities that held land management contracts. The planning and management of specific forest resources, such as xate (decorative palm), allspice, and rubber also required collective action, allowing subgroups to organize within the larger membership involved in a community concession. Promoting and legalizing collective management over forests can also be regarded as a strategic move by the Government to ensure the State's alienation and use rights over non-renewable resources (such as petroleum and gas). Communities continue to seek the increased security of the tenure rights they hold.



Before and after community forestry in Nepal: a change from gray to green

11. The Community Forestry Programme in Nepal is an innovation in participatory environmental governance that encompasses well-defined policies, institutions, and practices. The programme addresses the twin goals of forest conservation and poverty reduction. As over 70 per cent of Nepal's population depends on agricultural livelihoods, community management of forests has been critically important for food and the overall security of livelihoods. By April 2009, one third of Nepal's population was participating in the direct management of over one fourth of Nepal's forest area.

12. The Community Forestry Programme in Nepal has made substantial contributions to improved forest conditions, greater forest cover, increased economic benefits, social mobilization and the institutionalization of democracy at the grassroots. The immediate livelihood benefits derived by rural households, inputs to agriculture, food security and cash incomes bolster strong collective action through which local communities actively and sustainably manage forest resources.

As is often the case with social reform programmes, community forestry is less a linear and more an iterative and "muddling through" process. The success of community forestry lies in the engagement of various stakeholders from the very beginning of programme formulation.

13. Since its introduction, the Community Forestry Programme has undergone a major change in its scope, objectives and priorities. In Nepal, the Programme was initially formulated with the objective of forest protection and to ensure the basic forest products needs of local people. After 25 years of Programme implementation, forests are regenerated with a significant economic value. Through legislative developments and operational innovations over three decades, the programme has evolved from a protection-oriented, conservation-focused agenda to a much more broad-based strategy for forest use, enterprise development, and livelihoods improvement. Along with increased value, new issues such as the sale of forest products, enterprise development, changes in silviculture practices, and equitable benefit-sharing have emerged. Community forests have become the source of diversified investment capital and raw material for new market-oriented livelihoods. Community forestry shows the traits of political, financial and ecological sustainability, including the emergence of a strong legal and regulatory framework, and robust civil society institutions and networks. However, a continuing challenge is to ensure the equitable distribution of benefits to women and marginalized groups. Lessons for replication emphasize experiential learning, the establishment of a strong civil society network, flexible regulation to encourage diverse institutional modalities, and the responsiveness of Government and policymakers to a multi-stakeholder collaborative learning process.

III. Livelihoods and poverty reduction

14. Poverty reduction is a major global concern. The important role that forests play in rural livelihoods, especially those of the poor, is generally well recognized. The majority of the poor in Nepal are small and marginal farmers and landless households whose livelihood depends on traditional agriculture. Nepal has sought to improve the productivity of the forest sector as a means to meeting the Millennium Development Goals and reduce poverty, through a participatory approach that provides income-generation and employment opportunities (His Majesty's Government of Nepal, 2002).

15. In the late 1970s, in Nepal, widespread deforestation had led to serious environmental degradation. It was concluded that Governments acting alone were not able to reverse the trends. Of particular concern was the reduced access by local communities to forest products such as fuel wood and fodder that were critical to the maintenance of rural livelihoods. Community forestry as an identifiable implementation strategy evolved in its contemporary form at that time.

16. A rapid appraisal of forest product utilization, income and patterns of expenditure of 1,788 forest user groups from 12 hill and Terai districts in Nepal was carried out in 2002 and extrapolated to all the forest user groups in the country. The results indicated that the total annual cash income from the sale of forest products from community forests was 747 million rupees (more than $10 million). This amounted to almost 42 per cent of the annual budget of the Ministry of Forest and Soil Conservation. At the present time, 100 per cent of these benefits are going to

the forest user groups. To this figure can be added the cash equivalent of subsistence forest products and other income generated by the user groups, which was estimated to bring the total income to 1.8 billion rupees (approximately $24 million; Kanel and Niraula, 2004).

17. A different method of accounting reports that 8 million cubic feet of timber, 335 million kilograms of firewood and 370 million kilograms of grasses were produced from community forests. Those products are used to support the subsistence livelihood needs of local people. The forest user groups earned 383 million rupees from the sale of forest products outside the groups. Use of those earnings include community-development activities such as the building of schools, roads and drinking water facilities (36 per cent), and 12.6 million rupees for pro-poor community forestry, including loans to poor families and training for them in forest-based income-generating activities (Kanel and Niraula, 2004).

18. The community forestry policy of Nepal is regarded as a progressive method for establishing the rights of local people over forest resources; however, the promotion of forest-based enterprises has been limited. Recently, more forest user groups are initiating poverty-alleviation activities, helping to establish community forestry as a recognized pro-poor programme. The main areas of intervention include the promotion of income-generating activities and the establishment of concessions for the distribution of forest products. The income-generating activities include the domestication of non-timber forest products, support to livestock production, and the establishment of forest-based small-scale enterprises.

19. The participation of women, poor and disadvantaged groups is improving. The national database maintained at the Community Forestry Division shows that women's participation is 24 per cent and that there are about 600 community forest user groups managed by women-only committees (Kanel, 2006). Although women's involvement in implementing community forestry is very high, their role in decision-making is negligible.

20. The community forestry discourse in Nepal is now dominated by the "second generation issues" of governance, livelihoods and sustainable management. Governance has to be improved for two reasons: first, to make sure that the voice of the different groups of people, in particular the poor and excluded, are heard; secondly, to enhance the economic and social welfare of the people through the sustainable management of forest resources. Community forestry has the potential to significantly increase its contribution to improved livelihoods and poverty reduction (His Majesty's Government of Nepal, 2002).

IV. Enterprise development

21. The development of small-scale enterprises based on the existence of local resources, skills and markets is recognized as a method for poverty alleviation. Subedi (2006) believes that enterprise-oriented community forest management can generate positive outcomes for both conservation and the development of local livelihoods, while Anglesen and Wunder (2003) identify small-scale wood-processing enterprise development as a high priority area for poverty alleviation. As noted above, there is much opportunity for progress in this area in Nepal. The following observations are based on experience to date in small forest-based enterprise development.

22. In the context of community forest-based enterprise, local people primarily benefit through entrepreneurial development, rather than simply as wage labourers. Unlike other enterprises that utilize timber and non-timber forest products, there is no need for middlemen, owing to direct local marketing and processing. There are easy and direct linkages between the suppliers of raw materials, the producers of the final products and the consumer. This reduces the marketing chain and increases local benefits.

23. The success of new enterprises depends upon the community taking ownership and an active role in management. The forest-based small-scale enterprise initiatives of local communities need strong moral, technical, institutional and financial support from facilitating agencies.

24. Capacity-building by local people is a crucial factor in the development of the forest enterprises. To ensure that local people develop viable enterprises and operate them independently they must be involved from the outset in the planning of the enterprise (i.e., from idea generation, feasibility studies, product selection and the development of business plans).

25. Business support services are needed for the development of enterprises (e.g., skills development, bookkeeping training, forward linkages, promotion, price information and technology development and transfer). Depending upon the circumstances, these needs can best be met by extension agents from the communities, or by alliances with governmental, non-governmental or private sector partners.

26. Ensuring the continued availability of support services to the enterprises is also important once production is established and orders are being placed. Strategic alliances between local enterprises and private sector partners are an important model. Support for promising entrepreneurs to become community-based service providers that will provide services to other entrepreneurs at small, affordable fees is one option.

V. Biodiversity

27. A total of 192 countries, and the European Union, are now parties to the Convention on Biodiversity. In April 2002, the parties to the Convention committed to significantly reduce the loss of biodiversity by 2010. The results of efforts to meet that target have been mixed.

28. Some of the best results are being produced by the community forests in Nepal. An outstanding example is the conservation efforts for rhinoceroses and tigers in the community forests that surround Chitwan National Park. The combination of clear management responsibility and the opportunity to benefit directly from conservation efforts through ecotourism has led to the very successful protection of these severely endangered species by communities.

VI. Forest timber: part of the solution to climate change

29. Forest timber is part of the solution to climate change. Carbon is stored in the growing tree and remains locked up in the resulting wood products, so forest timber

helps to reduce the effect of climate change even after the timber leaves the forest. Compared to other building products (steel, aluminium, etc.) the production of forest products leaves a very small carbon footprint.

30. Carbon financing presents an important new opportunity for the local people and community forests in Nepal. It also introduces new risks and constraints to their effective participation. Maximizing the opportunities and addressing the risks and constraints requires early and active community involvement, especially in negotiating roles, responsibilities, and benefits.

31. Secure ownership through full ownership, or the transfer of a significant bundle of rights to communities has been an ongoing challenge, even in the relatively advanced circumstances of Nepal. This is particularly so in the era of climate crisis. An additional dimension of rights has emerged with the new climate mitigation schemes such as reducing emissions from deforestation and forest degradation (REDD). Benefits for communities through REDD can be expected only if the communities have the full rights over forest carbon. In a situation where tenure rights over forest resources are confused, new schemes such as REDD will only add to the confusion and conflict between the State and communities.

VII. Conclusions

32. **The campaign for community forestry and community-based forestry management is expanding globally. Community-based forest management is making a great contribution to sustainable forest management, the conservation of biodiversity, the strengthening grass-roots democracy and people's organizations, and to achieving the Millennium Development Goals. The Community Forestry Programme in Nepal clearly demonstrates this contribution and its potential for improvements in the livelihoods of rural people, the increased involvement of women, the reversal of environmental degradation, and the conservation of biodiversity. It also clearly shows areas for further progress, such as enterprise development. Major groups respectfully request Member States and the participants at the ninth session of the United Nations Forum on Forests to develop strong policy, legal and regulatory frameworks to support community forestry and community-based forest management. Based on the experience in Nepal, the following issues need to be addressed to strengthen community forestry and community-based forest management:**

(a) **Establish clear tenure rights for local communities;**

(b) **Ensure the carbon rights of local communities;**

(c) **Provide recognition and rewards for local communities, family and indigenous peoples for the conservation of biodiversity through forest conservation;**

(d) **Support the development of services needed to encourage the development of small and medium forest enterprises to create employment at the local level;**

(e) **Establish investment funds to strengthen community forestry;**

(f) **Provide support to strengthen the federations and networks of local communities from the local level to the global level;**

(g) **Strengthen the concept of Forest for People in sustainable forest management.**

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